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SPIRIT NEWS

NORTHERN SPIRIT VS NEWCASTLE UNITED

Sunday 21 December, 2003

Kick off at 5.00pm

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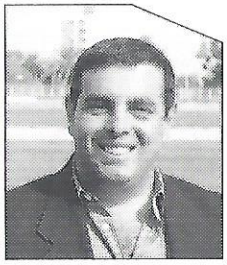
Antonio Gelonesi – Chairman



Welcome to Pittwater Park on the last Sunday prior to Christmas! On behalf of the Club I would like to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a happy New Year! Let's hope that we all get an early present today as we watch Northern Spirit play Newcastle United.

On the field, we've been on a bit of a bumpy ride recently. Our last match here at Pittwater Park was fantastic and saw us convincingly defeat the league leaders South Melbourne three goals to one. Since then we have unfortunately let two games slip that, according to Lawrie, were there to be won. We are a team that goes for broke and, good or bad, Spirit are the only NSL team not to record a draw this season. I believe we will see Spirit surge in the business end of the season and hopefully that rise begins with today's game. We proved last season that when the pressure is on we have the determination to succeed, and I'm sure we all hope Spirit will be there come finals time this season.

The past week has seen the release of the much awaited NSL taskforce report. After reading the report, I'm encouraged and more determined than ever to ensure that Northern Spirit secures their place in the new competition. We value your support of the Club and appreciate your attendance at each home game. To help us with our campaign to be part of the new competition, you can help by simply telling your friends about Spirit or bring them along to a match. A summer's afternoon at the soccer with your friends and family? Not a bad way to spend the day!

My congratulations go to Jonathan Richter and Alex Wilkinson who have returned from national duty in the United Arab Emirates this week. Your representation in the Australian under 20's was well deserved and you both did yourselves and Spirit proud. Please give them a special welcome today as they come back into the Spirit squad.

Once again, please have a safe Christmas and New Year. We look forward to seeing you again at Pittwater Park on Sunday 4th January 2004 when we take on the Marconi Stallions. Bring It On!

Enjoy the game today, go Spirit!

NORTHERN SPIRIT VS NEWCASTLE UNITED

Sunday 21 December, 2003

Kick off at 5.00pm

View From the Top – Lawrie McKinna

It has been a fortnight of ups and downs since I last wrote before the South Melbourne game at Pittwater Park. What a great match. I could not have been happier after that great team performance where each and every player played well. Thanks to those who came out to support us, your cheering for Spirit in that match was fantastic!

The midweek game in Adelaide and the following clash in Brisbane was a chance for us to follow up on that form and whilst we did not play badly, we were a gear below what we'd been at home. In Adelaide we conceded a set piece goal early in the game and failed to convert our chances when they came.

The trip to Brisbane last Saturday was even more disappointing in that we took the lead through Adam Kwasnik just after the half time break but ended up conceding three. To make matters worse we have lost Bradley Groves for a few weeks with a badly broken nose. Groves will now be out for several weeks as he receives specialist treatment to put his nose back together.

On a positive note Alex Wilkinson and Jonathon Richter have returned from the World Championships in the United Arab Emirates. That tournament was a great experience for the boys and we are hoping that they will get back into the swing of the National League quickly.

The Brisbane game has brought us over the halfway mark of the season and we are very mindful that we must improve things to make the finals at the end of the season. While we may be in a better position now than at the same time last season, we do not want to leave our winning run as late this year and will look to pick up points every game. Losing away games just puts more pressure on us winning at home and three points will be vital for us tonight.

Special mention has to go to the very vocal support we received last home game. The lads would really like to hear that again.

Enjoy the game!

Our Visitors Today: Newcastle United

Newcastle United come to Pittwater Park tonight with 19 points on the NSL ladder and will no doubt be determined not to fall out of that top six with so many teams, including the Spirit, within striking distance behind them.

There should be some familiarity amongst the names for Spirit fans as many of the players and Coach Ian Crook have spent time here. John Perosh (#20) is the man between the posts and he is supported by two more familiar faces in Scott Thomas (#5) and Adam Griffiths (#4) in defense.

Left sided Damien Brown (#21) and right sided Robbie Middleby (#22) provide the attacks out wide whilst the centre of the midfield is controlled by veterans Milan Blagojevic (#13) and Peter Tsekenis (#11). Joining them in the midfield is exciting Greg Owens (#7) who provides attacking options from the middle and has bagged two goals this year.

On that note, goal scoring has been a bit thin for Newcastle this year but the bulk of it has come their frontrunners in Fijian International Esala Masi (#17) and Ryan Griffiths (#9) who have scored two and three goals respectively.

Clashes between these two sides have traditionally been tight, passionate affairs and with plenty at stake for both teams it should be a great game. Hopefully it will again be goals aplenty in today's match at Pittwater Park and Northern Spirit will be working to be on the correct side of the score line. Earlier in the season in Newcastle Spirit had the best of the chances but conceded a couple of dubious penalties to go on and lose the match 2-1. Let's get behind the home team today and win the vital three competition points. ***Go Spirit!***

Spirit Focus on...Australian U/20 representative, Alex Wilkinson

Shirt Number:	18
Team:	Northern Spirit
Nickname:	Wilko
How did you get it:	My surname shortened with an "o"
Marital Status:	Single
Age:	18
Date of Birth:	13 August 1984
Place of birth:	Sydney
Height:	190cm
Weight:	78kg

Football Information

NSL Matches:	34
Signed with Spirit:	1999
Spirit Matches:	34
First Ever Soccer Club:	North Ryde
Previous Clubs:	North Ryde Gladesville/Hornsby
NSL Debut:	2002, Spirit vs Brisbane
Playing Position:	Defender
Left or Right Footed:	Right Footed
Pre-Match Meal:	Pasta
Representative Honours:	Aust U/17, NSW U/16, Aust U/20
Best Football Moment:	U/17 World Cup
Worst Football Moment:	Losing Quarter Final in U/17 World Cup in Nigeria
Worst Soccer Injury:	Broken Toe
Pet Hate on Field:	Whingers, players who don't try and referees who are biased
Funniest Team Mate:	John Hutchison
Best Football Advice:	Train like you play
Your Best Advice:	When in doubt, kick it out

Trivia

Favourite Movie:	American Pie
Favourite TV Show:	Fast and the Furious
Favourite Band/Music:	R'n'B and House
Favourite Food:	Mongolian Lamb & Chicken. Pizza
When not playing:	Go out with mates. Golf.
Dream Date:	Delta Goodrem
Favourite Holiday:	Fiji
First Job:	Big W
Which cartoon character are you most like:	Homer Simpson
Greatest fear:	Spiders & injuries
I'd like to improve on:	My golf game
Can't Live Without:	Food
Describe Yourself in three words:	Easy going
Worst Habit:	Gambling

NORTHERN SPIRIT

Shirt No.	Name	Playing Position	Date of Birth
1	Paul Henderson	Goalkeeper	22/04/76
2	Julian Watts	Defender	17/03/71
3	Wayne O'Sullivan	Midfield	25/02/74
4	Noel Spencer	Midfield	26/07/77
5	Alex Tobin	Defender	03/11/65
6	Vuko Tomasevic	Midfield	13/02/80
8	Ian Ferguson	Midfield	15/03/67
9	Adam Kwasnik	Striker	31/05/83
10	Dylan Macallister	Striker	17/05/82
11	Jonathan Richter	Midfield	12/04/83
12	John Hutchinson	Midfield	29/12/79
14	Bradley Groves	Midfield	29/01/82
16	Brent Fisher	Striker	06/07/83
17	Stewart Petrie	Striker	27/02/70
18	Alex Wilkinson	Defender	13/08/84
19	Erik Paartalu	Midfield	03/05/86
20	Stuart Page	Goalkeeper	01/05/85
22	Matthew Osman	Defender	29/07/83
23	Steven Baveas	Midfield	07/04/84
24	Oliver Skelding	Midfield	02/05/85
25	Omar Obeid	Midfield	23/05/85
26	Andrew Mailer	Midfield	19/04/84
28	Matthew Hunter	Defender	29/04/84
29	Michael Mouyis	Defender	04/06/85
30	Jacob Rex	Goalkeeper	04/10/84
33	Mark Milligan	Defender	04/08/85

NEWCASTLE UNITED

Shirt No.	Name	Playing Position	Date of Birth
1	Tom Willis	Goalkeeper	04/11/83
2	Craig Deans	Defender	07/05/74
5	Adam Griffiths	Defender	21/08/79
6	Scott Thomas	Midfield	19/08/73
7	Michael Prentice	Defender	22/09/82
8	Greg Owens	Midfield	27/01/81
9	Mark Wilson	Midfield	04/07/74
10	Ryan Griffiths	Striker	21/08/81
11	Mitchell Johnson	Midfield	26/02/83
12	Peter Tsekenis	Midfield	04/08/73
13	Josh Mitchell	Defender	08/06/84
14	Milan Blagojevic	Midfield	24/12/69
15	Jobe Wheelhouse	Midfield	14/04/85
16	Keegan Wolfenden	Defender	04/04/86
18	Esala Masi	Striker	09/03/74
21	John Perosh	Goalkeeper	29/11/73
22	Damian Brown	Midfield	12/01/75
23	Robbie Middleby	Midfield	09/08/75
25	Steve Eagleton	Midfield	26/10/76
28	Peter McPherson	Defender	18/06/84
32	Mitchell Wallace	Striker	10/04/85
33	Thomas Libbesson	Midfield	20/08/84
34	Mitchell O'Brien	Goalkeeper	10/12/84
35	Ben Kennedy	Goalkeeper	14/02/87

From the Terrace – Graham Hand

There's rarely a dull moment watching Northern Spirit. The last home game against South Melbourne, at the time the competition leaders, produced three cracking Spirit goals. Amazingly, South had conceded only four goals in their 11 previous games all season.

Up front, Stewart Petrie looked sharp and eager for work. Both his goals were sensational 20 metre shots into the top left of the net, the second from a swivel that Ruud van Nistelrooy would have cherished. Brent Fisher capped off his recent selection for New Zealand with a lovely run though the middle and a neat finish.

At the other end of the field, the Spirit defence was again causing more heart-stopping moments than Ricky Martin in a girls' boarding school. We miss Alex Wilkinson as much as any other player, especially since his absence forces the excellent Wayne O'Sullivan away from his favoured midfield role. Similarly, Noel Spencer continued to play in Alex Tobin's position, depriving the Spirit midfield of another force. With the mighty Fergie injured, the young shoulders of Groves and Baveas have an enormous burden in midfield. They both came through the South Melbourne game with enhanced reputations, although Lawrie must convince the otherwise industrious Baveas to look forward rather than pass back.

Most fans who have watched Spirit regularly this season will feel we are not consistent enough to be in the Top 2, especially with injuries and absences. Dylan Macallister will be away with the Australian Under 23's as soon as the Under 20 players return. However, we are definitely good enough to play in the finals, and from there, anything can happen.

As promised, more from the chat with Antonio Gelonesi

GH: When you first became involved with Northern Spirit, did someone approach you or did you see the opportunity?

AG: Originally, it was a very quiet opportunity. I spent a fair bit of time thinking about what sort of role I could play. There was concern that the team would cease to operate if something was not resolved.

GH: Are we talking about the beginning of last season?
AG: This was around June 2002. I felt empowered to take some role, then it unfolded the way it did. We're striving towards making Spirit part of the future of soccer in this country. Soccer registrations are at all-time highs, it's a well- supported game. We want to service our Associations and be part of the community.

GH: Do you see a player coming through that particularly excites you?
AG: That's tough for me to answer because as a group, we are blessed with great talent. Every one of the youth team coming through now, subject to the right opportunities, has a chance to be successful. Spirit has a balance of youth and mature players, which means they are learning from some of the best that play the game. I don't want to mention individuals, I'm proud of the whole team.

GH: What do you think the strengths and weaknesses of the team are?
AG: Where a superior team may exploit us is in critical decisions at pressure times. Our raw enthusiasm will combat that on most occasions. Sometimes, communication at the back has let us down, but it is not because the skill is not there. No matter which team you play in the NSL, they have the ability to exploit you.

GH: There's a lot of talk among the fans on the future of the game and the Club.
AG: The web sites the fans use are a tremendous source of information for me. I don't post as much as I used to, because it is sometimes difficult for me to write down the confidential material. A few years ago, in the early stages of the fan web site, we heard that Spirit team had overpaid, overweight, underperforming athletes. What we've seen in the last 12 months has been extraordinary. We've seen a team that was at its lowest ebb in December last year, turn around and make the finals. We have tried to create an identity which makes me comfortable. We need to be a team that entertains, and we allow players to express themselves, not be constrained or held back. If the pride is shared, if people come and watch games, it puts to doubt those people who were willing us to fail.

It is every team's objective to put together a business plan that fundamentally takes into account a number of critical areas. Our seat at the table will be as good as everyone else's. It's not a time to be individual. I want all Sydney teams to be successful, because it is good for the sport. It's not a personal thing, it's a collective thing. The best is in front of us.

NSL TABLE

Prior to Round 15

No.	Team	GP	W	D	L	Streak	GF	GA	Pts
1	South Melbourne	13	8	2	3	W2	30	10	26
2	Parramatta Power	12	7	2	3	L1	27	12	23
3	Perth Glory	11	7	2	3	W1	21	14	22
4	Brisbane Strikers	13	6	1	3	W1	17	13	22
5	Sydney United	12	5	4	3	L1	11	7	19
6	Newcastle United	13	5	4	4	W1	16	15	19
7	Adelaide United	11	4	5	2	D1	13	12	17
8	Marconi Stallions	13	4	4	5	L2	12	16	16
9	Northern Spirit	13	5	0	8	L2	20	21	15
10	Wollongong Wolves	12	4	2	6	W1	12	19	14
11	Sydney Olympic	13	3	4	6	D1	10	19	13
12	Melbourne Knights	12	3	2	7	W1	9	22	11
13	Football Kingz	12	1	2	9	L1	12	30	5

www.northernspirit.com.au

Next Spirit Match:

Northern Spirit
vs
Sydney Olympic

Sunday 28 December, 2003 – OKI Jubilee Stadium

Kick off at 5.00pm

Next Spirit Home Match:

NORTHERN SPIRIT
VS
MARCONI STALLIONS

Sunday 4 January, 2004 – Pittwater Park

Kick off at 6.30pm

BRING IT ON!

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